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**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

Ligands for flt3 receptors capable of transducing self-renewal signals to regulate the growth, proliferation or differentiation of progenitor cells and stem cells are disclosed. The invention is directed to flt3-L as an isolated protein, the DNA encoding the flt3-L, host cells transfected with cDNAs encoding flt3-L, compositions comprising flt3-L, methods of improving gene transfer to a mammal using flt3-L, and methods of improving transplantations using flt3-L. Flt3 -L finds use in treating patients with anemia, AIDS and various cancers.